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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIREFIGHTER TIMOTHY JULIAN

Interview Date: December 26, 2001

Transcribed by Maureen McCormick

BATTALION CHIEF LAKIOTES: Today's date is December 26, 2001. The time is approximately 12:45 hours. My name is Chief Art Lakiotes, Safety Battalion, New York City Fire Department. I'm conducting an interview with --

THE WITNESS: Firefighter JULIAN, Timothy Julian.

BATTALION CHIEF LAKIOTES: What company?

THE WITNESS: Ladder 118.

BATTALION CHIEF LAKIOTES: 118, regarding the events of September 11, 2001.

Q. Tim, if you would just tell me in your own words -- start with the response and then take me through.

A. All right. I'm assigned to Ladder 118. I was working in Engine 205 on a mutual exchange for the day tour. The box came in. I believe the plane crashed at a quarter to nine. We responded to a plane hitting the first, you know, north tower, just the engine, not the truck.

I had the backup position. I didn't have a radio. I also was riding backwards, and I remember going over the Brooklyn Bridge, and we still at that point probably thought it was an accident. I remember

saying to the guys, "Guys, we're going to make history today." I meant that in a good way.

It was just a lot of hysteria, people exiting Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge. When we got to the Manhattan side, it was chaos, and I do believe that's one of the reasons why I'm still here is because at that point, I think we were responding to the north tower, and there was no access at all, so I think we made a left on Broadway at that point and started heading south.

Because I was riding backwards, I was a little disoriented. Finally, we made it to Broadway and Liberty, and the second plane hit, so that was probably about nine o'clock, and it was the loudest explosion I ever heard. It was mass hysteria, and screaming, and people running, and that's when we realized -- at least I realized it was more than just an accident. It was an attack.

There were some injured civilians at that point that came up to us asking us to help them, and we offered them some EMS bandages and what not and told them to keep moving.

We got back on our rig, and we proceeded south. I'm not sure which street we went west on, but

we came back up Trinity Place, the corner of Trinity and Liberty, and we parked our rig, and I remember getting off our rig, [redacted]

A. He saw what was going on, believe me. Anyhow, we walked down Liberty Street west past 10 and 10's quarters. They already had a triage going on already, wounded civilians. In the street that day there was like a market probably going to take place, a farmer's market or shopping bazaar, whatever you want to call it. It was vendors wagons.

Now, at this point, Liberty Street was pretty much desolate, except us. It was Lieutenant Hayes, Chris Murray, fireman at 205, myself at backup, and then George Clancy from 205 in control.

As we were walking down Liberty Street, we started realizing that, not only was there bodies and debris in the street, some burning, paper and debris, metal, but we started seeing -- it wasn't even bodies. It was parts of bodies, and it was pretty disgusting

and shocking, and I think we realized we were obviously in a bad zone, perhaps things falling from the building, and Lieutenant Hayes made a smart decision.

We saw a command post going on under the foot bridge at West Street and Liberty, but we walked to, I guess, Washington Street or even Greenwich. I'm not sure. Yeah, I think Greenwich. We cut over to Albany and down to West Street and back to that foot bridge, and I believe that's another reason the clock's ticking in our favor, not knowing at the time Lieutenant Hayes made that decision, figuring we were in a -- I don't want to say a collapse zone. We didn't think it would collapse but --

Q. Falling debris zone at least.

A. Falling debris zone. It was dangerous. Saw body parts everywhere. So we did that, and we made it to the foot bridge. At West Street, I remember seeing Chief Barbara. I saw you chief, but unfortunately -- I knew he was talking to another chief. I didn't know it was you.

At that point, I remember they were getting a report that a second -- another plane -- the Pentagon got hit, and we got a report another plane was coming in, and I believe it was a FBI agent, or whoever, or

police, and he was saying it's not another plane yet. It is a plane, but it's a fighter jet, and in hindsight it turns out probably that was the fighter jet that was going to maybe shoot down that plane, but we thought another plane was coming in, and we were in a bad spot.

Q. Paranoia was bound to set in.

A. But upon his -- we heard it fly over, and then we felt safe. It wasn't a kamikaze plane, you know.

Q. Yes.

A. I remember being at that command post, and it was pretty much a lot of radio traffic and a lot going on, and we were kind of nagging Chief Barbara to put us to work. We saw several jumpers from Building 1, the north tower, on the West Street side, and every time we saw a jumper, every time we were anxious to go to work. Put out the fire, they stop jumping. And I remember Lieutenant Hayes saying 205, you know, he wants to go chief, and the chief barked at us, "Guys, open your coats, loosen up your masks and sit tight for a minute, stand by till we figure out where we are going to put you."

Because I guess on the original plan we were going to the first tower, but due to traffic and

hysteria, we didn't make it there. Again, the clock is ticking in our favor, not knowing this, though, of course.

At that point, I think I remember getting an assignment to 216, 205, I think 217, and I think ladder 122, to go into 2 World Trade, report to another command post, and take it from there.

At that point, we got our gear together. We headed up Cedar Street to our left. Between us and the building was a small church, and there was a parking lot at the foot of that foot bridge, and there were several car fires going on. So we kind of went up Cedar Street for that very reason to avoid that to get to Washington Street, and then we were going to cut across to go into an entranceway at 2 -- the Liberty Street entrance at 2 World Trade, and that's when I saw 216 when they rounded the corner, and they were about 20 feet in front of me.

I saw them acting -- I don't know what's the word. Just excitedly, and there was a problem. I really thought that first they found a civilian injured, and I ran up as did other companies that were with us, and that's when I saw it was a fireman that was injured and down, and they began dragging him.

We figured let's get him out of the area. In front of 90 West on Cedar there was a scaffold. Let's bring him up to there. We figured that's more safe, and I heard them saying "Danny, Danny" and I realized. I looked down. It was Danny Suhr, from 216. I knew him from the football team. I still didn't realize that was him, you know. I just -- [redacted], I guess, but I remember help dragging him over there. I picked up his helmet, and we brought him to the entranceway of 90 West, and we opened up his coat and started giving him CPR as other guys ran to get a EMT paramedic and an ambulance, and I remained at 90 West working on Danny, and finally we got a stretcher.

We got him on the stretcher. We got an oxygen bag valve and off they went. I remained, though, at 90 West. I did remember having his helmet, and his helmet was split on top, and I put it to the side, and I know the guys -- I heard were looking for that later on. That was the last time I saw it. I remember at that time we packaged him, and he went.

I heard a rumor that Father Judge came over, but I didn't see him. I heard that Father Judge was perhaps on West and Vesey. No way he could have been on West and Liberty, but nonetheless, Danny made it to

an ambulance, and our guys came back, 205, so now it was 216, 205, I think 217, and I'm not quite sure what happened to 217 and 216. I know two guys from 216 are missing, I believe. I'm thinking they ran across into 2 World.

We're are figuring now we were obviously in danger, falling debris zone. I remember standing on the corner of Cedar and Washington, putting my mask back on, getting my roll-up. I had an extra bottle, and my back to the trade tower. I'm in a bad spot here, you know.

I remember walking back to 90 West. 205, we regrouped together, Lieutenant Hayes, Clancy, Murray and myself, and at that point -- and there was a photographer from the Daily News, who now gave me a picture that I just showed to you, which I'm going to keep with my own (inaudible.)

Anyhow, I remember seeing him then at that point, and a building maintenance guy from 90 West came out, and he was waving us in. "Guys, come through this way."

And Lieutenant Hayes was contemplating finding a subway entrance through one of the buildings -- probably Bankers Trust or 90 West, if they had one

-- so we could get into 2 World Trade and work our way up. We figured it was dangerous in the street.

Q. Right.

A. So we cut through 90 West. The guy -- security maintenance guy pointed us out to, I guess, Albany Street, and we popped out that door, and we headed east again. I remember the photographer. He says he went west.

I don't know what happened, again, to 216 and 122. We came out from 90 West, made a left, headed east, and right when we got to the corner of Washington and Albany, that's when I heard the building collapse.

First I thought it was an explosion. I thought maybe there was a bomb on the plane, but delayed type of thing, you know, secondary device.

Q. I was convinced for a week it was secondary devices.

A. You know, and I just heard like an explosion and a then a cracking type of noise, and then it sounded like a freight train, rumbling and picking up speed, and I remember I looked up, and I saw it coming down, and I was able to make it across Washington to the very corner of Washington and Albany. I think it's the south side of Bankers Trust building.

I made it right to the corner, and there's a column right there, and I was with my guys. We all made it to like the column, and I remember it was plate glass behind me, and I'm thinking I'm going to get hit by this glass and like a porcupine. I'm going to get it, you know, but nonetheless, it rumbled.

It was the loudest rumbling I ever heard. The ground shook, and I got thrown down, and I remember it just got black, and I got knocked down. I remember being buried. I think I ducked more or less, you know, pieces of metal -- something hit me, not that heavy, though. Wasn't an I beam or else I wouldn't be talking to you, and I remember that being on me, and I kind of -- I was able to stand up and push everything off me, but now I felt like I was in the street or the sidewalk, and it was hot, smoky. I felt like I was in a fire, and I remember digging my way out. A lot of cementation, powdery insulation, whatever you want to call it. Almost like being in a blizzard with some metal debris right on me. Fortunately nothing heavy hit me.

I got my mask on, and I found my extra cylinder. I figured I need that, and I was looking for the building, 90 West, and I found it, put my

flashlight on, and I found 90 West, and I was just about to smash the window of 90 West to get inside, and right when I did it, I felt a hand grab me and pull me in the doorway, and I think it was Engine 220, a lieutenant. I don't know who he was. He grabbed me.

I told him I was with 205, and we started hollering for each other, and we went into 90 West, and we kind of regrouped. We were missing Clancy for a short while, but we finally found him. He went into another building. Somebody else found him, and the ironic part is 90 West is now being collapsed on and is on fire. No, I'm sorry. Bankers Trust, and we're inside taking refuge.

We figured safer in there than in the street, but we figured once we regrouped and kind of calmed down, we took our masks off, and we talked to each other. It was kind of, like, all right, let's head back either West Street or, you know, head south a block.

So now originally we were with 220 engine. We got our act together. We went across Albany Street to the next building. I'm not sure what building that was, and we cut through that building. Now, it's two engine companies. We got no tools. I had my extra

cylinder. I don't know if it was -- once we got in that side, but on the next street, a car outside. I think it was locked, and I remember breaking the door with a cylinder, and I think we went -- I don't know whether we went one more block to Rector. I don't remember. I know we cut through at least two buildings south, directly right through, and then we popped out on, I think, Rector and made it up to, I guess, Greenwich. I'm not sure if it was -- I think it was Trinity. We made it to Trinity.

Looking for our rig, we figured we'd head back to our rig, find our chauffeur, or even the command post, whatever we had to do, you know, and at that point the second building collapsed. I heard the same exact noise all over again. It was just a little further away, and there was people in the street.

We kind of heard them, people on the street wandering around in shock. We were like kind of hurrying them to get inside, get inside, and people had minor cuts and bleeding. I saw faces in a doorway on Trinity. I don't remember the address. 61 Trinity or whatever it was. Probably Trinity and Rector. It was the building right there.

I remember I saw people inside. We ran in

there thinking let's get these people off the street in there and figure out what our next move is. And then the second building collapsed, and it was like a big wave again, a woosh, paper, and debris, and powder, and fire and smoke.

And at that point we were inside, and as it turned out, there were people in the building who wanted to leave, and we talked them in to staying, and we were trying to reassure them. Some people had cell phones. The phones were working. We told the people call your families. They helped us out. They gave us water. We washed our eyes out, towels.

I remember I called my fiancee. We're married now, but called her, and she works at [redacted], and I got her machine. Now, it's about -- do you know what time the second building collapsed?

Q. The second building collapsed at exactly 10:20?

A. 10:29 or something?

Q. 10:29.

A. 10:20? SO this is probably like 10:45, 10:35, you know.

Q. Right.

A. And I remember calling her and my mother, and

I got both their machines, so now I'm thinking New York just got bombed by, you know -- so we kind of regrouped, washed our eyes out. They were caked, you know, ended up getting conjunctivitis.

Q. Sure.

A. After that, but anyhow we regrouped, got our stuff together, and we headed back to Liberty and Trinity, and we found our rig, and we couldn't find our chauffeur, Tom Boccarossa, but we ran into some of our guys that off duty, came in, came across, and it collapsed, and they just escaped the collapse from -- they were on their way to the area, and so they experienced pretty much what we experienced.

So we all kind of teamed up. We saw our rig. We got our rig from corner the of Trinity. It was buried. The windows were blown out. There was a couple of car fires going on. We moved some stuff out of the way. Richie Murray drove it. He jumped in it. He turned it around, headed south, and then he headed west. I don't know if it was Rector. Probably Rector Street. We cut back to West Street, went north again.

I remember we made it to about the Marriott, south of -- to Carlyle and West, and we made it to there, and at that point they were starting to stretch

lines into 90 West, was pretty much going, and we stretched the line in there, and we were helping out, and it was just chaos everywhere.

Stretching a line here, help over here. There were guys setting up a hose to the draft from the river, and I actually knew a captain, Richie Weldon. He was a lieutenant at 74 engine when I was there, and I remember helping stretch like 3 1/2 for little awhile, and I remember going back to our guys, and we stretched a line into 90 West, and that was getting shitty, and they backed us out of there, and then we got an order to set up in the Marriott with a couple of other companies or on Albany. I guess between Albany and Carlyle, there was a Marriott right there.

We ended up walking up 40 fights of stairs with our roll-ups in the Marriott, and we brought a stang as well. Another company -- we were was taking turns carrying, and we made it to like 37, 38, 39. We set up at the windows on the north side and the roof, you know, multi-versile. The water pressure was horrible, and we were just shooting water on 90 West pretty much the rest of the day. That's where I spent most -- I spent the rest of the day, and then finally we got relieved maybe around -- I guess like 7, and we

walked back down 40 flights of stairs, and our rig got ravaged, all our tools and flashlights. Everything you had left on the rig, gone. Mask --

Q. Sure.

A. And at that point, I remember heading over to West, I guess West and Liberty again, and just starting to search, and plough, you know, and I must have been there for a couple of hours. I don't think I had a watch on. I think that threw me off that day. Maybe I was better off, but I remember it was around eleven o'clock that night, me and a couple of guys, we walked to the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, and we started getting rides from PD vans, you know, a car going over, and I don't know if it was that night.

One of the nights, New York, Manhattan trustee, Rudy SanFilippo -- I could be mistaken. Maybe it wasn't the first night, but one of the nights I was working, he gave me a ride over the Brooklyn Bridge, but I think the first night a police car -- I hopped in the trunk literally exhausted. I was covered in shit.

Q. Definitely.

A. My eyes were --

Q. Gone.

A. Shot, burnt, red, and made it back to the

firehouse. That was the first night pretty much. I mean, Lieutenant Hayes -- I mean, traffic, we got delayed. Lieutenant Hayes made us go around to Albany, and then after Danny got hit, I really thought he got hit by debris, but the rumor was he got hit by a body. I didn't see it.

I know he was hit, obviously. It killed him. At the time we were working on him, I really didn't think he was gone, but I was obviously in denial. You know, you just want to help, but we helped 216 trying to help him, take the latest -- again, the clock's ticking, the bus, and then the guy from 90 West suggested we cut through. Lieutenant Hayes was, like, let's find a subway entrance to go underground into 2 and work our way up.

He was smart. He was thinking. There was a lot of chaos, and he kept his head, and 205, we stuck together. We bumped into other companies along the way, but I really believe that Tom Hayes -- you know, he made a couple of decisions right there that --

Q. That were right.

A. I'm still talking to you.

Q. That's true, sure.

A. And we all kept our heads, and we stayed

together, and we had an idea if we stuck together, and with Hayes, you know. We worked as a team and I believe he saved my life.

Q. Sure. It was not a day where you knew what decision to make.

A. No.

Q. It was --

A. Especially when there was a collapse, there's a fire. There was a car fire. Like, what do you do first?

Q. Exactly. Plus as part of the event, your thought process takes a little bit of what you're actually seeing, because you don't believe what you're seeing.

A. Right.

Q. When you're seeing those towers come down.

A. I never thought they would come down.

Q. No, it's amazing. It's --

A. I knew we were going to have a bad situation, maybe a partial collapse, you know, whatever, but never the whole thing. No way. I was in construction many years before this.

Q. No, nobody had any idea that was going to happen, obviously.

BATTALION CHIEF LAKIOTES: That concludes the interview. It's approximately 1305.